

Preserving trails depends on all of us

Construction and maintenance of trails on Cypress Island continues with the help of volunteers, including the Student Conservation Association and Pacific Crest Outward Bound School. With increasing use and limited public funding, trails often remain open because of these efforts.

For current information about the island, seasonal restrictions or closures and to learn how you can help protect its resources and recreational opportunities, contact:

Department of Natural Resources  
Northwest Region, Cypress Island Steward  
919 N. Township St.  
Sedro Woolley, WA 98284-9395  
360-856-3500  
Telephone Device for the hearing impaired  
360-856-1371

EMERGENCY phone numbers

- Medical Aid/Sheriff — 911
- Vandalism — 1-800-527-3305
- To report Wildfires — 1-800-562-6010 or 911

This information will be made available in an alternate format. Please call: 360-902-1340 or Telephone Device for the hearing impaired 360-902-1125



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Cypress Island Natural Resources Conservation Area

Cypress Island Natural Resources Conservation Area (NRCA) was established in 1987 as one of the first four public lands protected by the state's Natural Resources Conservation Act. More than 3,900 acres of Cypress Island and its tidelands now are protected as a conservation area. Low impact public use is allowed in designated areas if it does not negatively affect the area's protected resources.

Cypress Island Natural Area Preserve

Cypress Island's more fragile 1,073 acres are managed as a Natural Area Preserve, the highest level of protection for Washington's natural heritage. These special plant and animal communities contribute to the genetic diversity within the state.

Natural Area Preserves provide living laboratories, and serve as reference points in comparing natural and managed environments. DNR encourages and schedules scientific research and educational visits on these sensitive sites.



Trails

**Pelican Beach** 0.5 mi; 260' elev gain; Access to Eagle Cliff Trail and Duck Lake Loop. Climbs gradually through dense canopy forest.

**Eagle Cliff** 1 mi; 542' elev gain; **Closed Feb 1 - July 15.** Only access is from the Pelican Beach Trail. Climbs steeply to the Eagle Cliff summit for sweeping views of other islands and mountain ranges. Trail passes through sensitive forest habitat and grassy bald outcrops. Please stay on trail.

**Duck Lake** 2.1 mi; 295' elev gain; Follows old logging road from Eagle Harbor to Duck Lake, looping back across slope above the harbor. Duck Lake is an 11-acre wetland, offering bird and wildlife viewing.

**Duck Lake Connector** 0.3 mi; 300' elev gain; Steep trail connects Eagle Harbor to the upper Duck Lake Loop. Climbs old log skid road over a rocky slope, follows a seasonally wet drainage through a western redcedar stand.

NATURAL AREAS

Cypress Island



Plants reflect island's diverse conditions

About 90 percent of Cypress Island is a forest dominated by Douglas-fir. Moist north slopes nurture a closed canopy of western redcedar and western hemlock, with an understory of salal, ocean spray, and sword fern. Mixed deciduous forests include Rocky Mountain maple, big leaf maple, and red alder.

Cypress's geology includes serpentine soils with naturally occurring metals such as nickel, cobalt, and chromium. These conditions are found in the southern two-thirds of the island and may support uniquely adapted plant communities. One of Washington's only protected, low-elevation serpentine forests is here.

Exposed south-facing slopes host species such as shore pine, Rocky Mountain juniper, Pacific madrone, and Idaho-fescue-dominated grasslands.

Cypress Island and the Natural Areas Program

Cypress Island is a magical place. It is an island of contrasts in lush green forests and barren rocks above the mists and steel blue of northern Puget Sound. It lies within the San Juan Island archipelago, just 4 miles northwest of Anacortes. With booming popularity and population pressures in the area, large undeveloped islands such as Cypress have become rare.

Historically used by First Nations people and later by European settlers, Cypress Island escaped heavy development due to difficult access, rugged terrain, and poor soils for farming. However, over time, people have extensively logged, fished, and sporadically mined for chromite and olivine. Today, more than 5,000 acres of the island's 5,500 acres are protected. Unique features include a mosaic of recovering high quality lowland forests, lakes, wetlands, grassy-bald ecosystems, cobblestone and sand beaches, and outstanding vistas.



Hikers view to the northeast towards Sinclair and Lummi islands

Protecting our unique natural legacy

Cypress Island is part of the Natural Areas Program managed by the state Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Sites are chosen for their outstanding native ecosystems and their geological and historical resources. DNR maintains and restores the resources on about 86,800 acres in 31 Natural Resource Conservation Areas, and more than 30,800 acres in 49 Natural Area Preserves.

Natural Areas either have been donated or purchased from willing sellers.

Cypress Island is accessible by private boat and is not on an existing ferry route

Animals find refuge at Cypress

The combination of contiguous forests, grasslands, cliffs, talus slopes, and wetlands provide diverse habitats for wildlife. Public participation in keeping disturbances to a minimum will allow the natural processes to continue, and Cypress Island to remain a refuge for wildlife in the future.



On Cypress Island, you may observe blacktail deer, beaver, river otter, banana slugs, garter snakes, rough-skinned newts, and 140 species of birds. Ask for bird and plant checklists from DNR's Northwest Region.

DNR Photo

**Cypress Lake** 0.5 mi; 140' elev gain; Passes Stella Swamp (aka Homestead Lake). In a steep-sided basin, Cypress Lake is the largest lake on the island (15 acres and 20 feet deep). No swimming or pets in this sensitive watershed.

**Strawberry Bay/Reef Point** From the public access at Strawberry Bay, the Strawberry Bay Trail (980' elev gain) follows an old road south for 0.6 mile. At "Y", the trail switchbacks for 1.5 miles to the Cypress Mainline Road or continues south for 1.1 miles on the Reef Point Trail (1.7 mi; 440' elev gain). The 0.1 mile spur to Reef Point, the site of a former olivine mine, is clearly marked. From junction with the Reef Point spur, the trail continues 0.4 mile to connect with the Cypress Mainline Road. Please respect the rights of private communities on Cypress Island and stay on the trails shown on the map.

**Reed Lake Loop** 0.5 mi; no elev gain; Trail circles natural depression transformed into a lake by previous developers. Swimming is allowed. By midsummer, aquatic vegetation dominates this 5-acre lake.

Note: mi = mile(s); elev = elevation